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## Local

# Report Looks At Drilling Wastewater & North Texas Earthquakes

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Reporting [Jack Fink](#)

**DALLAS (CBS 11 NEWS)** – The natural gas boom in the Barnett Shale here in North Texas jolted the local economy — but did it also create a stir below ground and cause multiple earthquakes in Cleburne in 2009 and 2010?

Ashley Justinic, a former graduate student at Southern Methodist University (SMU) and lead author of a new study from the university said, “It’s definitely a maybe. It’s one of those things that you can’t really prove it.”

Dr. Brian Stump, chairman of Geological Sciences at SMU, said that before 2008 there weren’t any earthquakes in the Fort Worth Basin. Since 2008, there have been 50. He says what may trigger the earthquakes is the process of injecting wastewater and other fluids into the ground.

Stump says in Cleburne, two of the injecting sites were close to the earthquakes. But the reason there isn’t a definite link is because the injections began in 2005 and the earthquakes didn’t start happening until four years later.

Stump now believes an earthquake can only be triggered if the injections go into a fault below ground. “I believe that to be true. That’s why within this basin, there are many injectors with no earthquakes associated with them.”

Since the quakes in Cleburne were all minor – the largest being 2.8 in magnitude – Stump isn't alarmed. But he said his sense of worry could change if the quakes become more powerful. "I can't tell you how big the earthquakes could become. The concern would be if they would become larger."

Researchers recommend crews don't inject wastewater fluids into faults. The problem though is no one knows where all of the faults are below ground.

There are about 30,000 active injection sites statewide, and the Texas Railroad Commission says none of the permits for them have been suspended or terminated because of earthquakes.

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